

Community Services Presentation, December 2023

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This morning I'd like to share with you a few 'snapshots' from this past year as Community Services stepped out, asking God to guide and use us to help anyone in need. As I was preparing what to say this morning the words of a familiar children's hymn came to mind - you will know them too:

"Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light
Like a little candle burning in the night
In this world of darkness -
So we must shine
You in your small corner and I in mine "

The words of that lovely old hymn says it very clearly, Jesus, the Light of the World, invites us all to serve Him by serving others right where we are; and so we also become light in the world. It has been said,

"Not all of us can do great things but we can do small things with great love "

And never underestimate the value of those seemingly small acts of kindness. We serve an amazing God who can bless and use them in ways we can't begin to imagine, to reveal His love.

Following on from Covid restrictions with prolonged periods of isolation for many our Tuesday meet up at Belton Garden Centre Cafe, near Grantham, has become very important. It gives us the opportunity to make plans, socialise, encourage and support each other and generally enjoy each other's company in a warm, inviting (even if somewhat noisy) environment.

One member said, "It means such a great deal to meet up with friends especially if you're lonely like me." Another commented, "It is a pleasure to belong to this group-so pleasant and always willing, looking out for those in need .We did not benefit from this where we lived before - it wasn't workable - we are blessed indeed."

Just knowing that you belong, are accepted and loved as part of a friendship group can keep you going through dark times .

The cost of living crisis, with families struggling to cope, made it important to increase support for the local Foodbank. Our slogan 'If you can -give a can', hopefully encouraged us all to donate regularly to help those in need of basic food and toiletries. After a delivery of food from our Harvest Festival this year Foodbank said in a letter to our church:

"Your donations will help us restore dignity and put smiles on local family's faces."

Helping to Light up someone else's life is a tremendous source of happiness and joy for everyone concerned.

We have also been pleased to donate money to The Bible Society's Prison Ministry service helping to provide Bibles and run The Bible Course. Dominic, a chaplain in two prisons, one high security institution and one open prison said,
"I've seen more people encounter Jesus personally in prison than in decades of ministry in

churches. Your support sends a powerful message of love and care and I'm so grateful." How wonderful to find lives changed by Jesus who fills hearts with Hope and Peace.

Baby hats, blankets, cardigans and cannula sleeves for babies are regularly knitted and crocheted by our team of expert knitters. The majority are sent to SCBUs in Lincoln and Boston; over 100 items have been delivered this year alone. Two members of the knitting team are over 90 years of age; they are incredible and show that age is absolutely no barrier to service. Friends of knitters have joined in too, making a tremendous contribution overall. A recent thank you letter from one of the hospitals said of the donations, "They are very much appreciated by us all, with love from staff and mummies."

Also some of these lovely knitted items are in our display for Baby's Basket Charity along with other baby supplies.

I want to say a big thank you to all those who have given their generous support so consistently throughout the year.

Recently a church friend rang me to say she had seen something caught in a plant in her garden. On closer inspection she found it was a £10 note! After asking her neighbours if anyone was missing it and, that not being the case, she donated it to help buy items for the Baby Basket Charity, which was wonderful!

But ...that's not all.

Later driving down the High Street, my husband Steve and I passed the Bargain Hunters shop and noticed two Moses baskets for sale. We parked the car and went in. Both were in excellent condition and one was the sort recommended by Baby Basket. I asked the shopkeeper what he wanted for it; £10, came the reply. Yes ... I bought it with that £10 note and it is now ready to be donated - how wonderful is that?

But...that's not all either.

That same person who found the £10 note in her garden also spotted some paper lying on the ground in Morrisons car park. This time it was a £5 note which she has again donated to Baby's Basket.

Well... I've told that friend I'm definitely going shopping with her next time she's out! But really - what an amazing God we serve! There is nothing too big and nothing too small that is beyond His power to bless and multiply for use in His service and we are so thankful for everything He does for us.

At this time of year Christians everywhere will be celebrating the birth of our Saviour long ago, Jesus Christ -The Light of the World - Immanuel - God with us.

We weren't there when He was laid as a newborn baby in a manger, no crib for a bed but when Jesus said later, "What you do for others you do for me," it becomes both a privilege and a joy to be able to provide a Moses Basket with baby items for a mother and her newborn baby in need today and it comes with our love too.